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IT'S ED'S TURN TO QUESTION TEJASHWI

RJD leader and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav (pic) arriving at the Enforcement Directorate's office on Tuesday in connection with the land-for-jobs scam his family is allegedly involved in. He was questioned for about nine hours. The agency recorded his statement under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Last month, the CBI had questioned him in the same case | PTI | P9

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189 in BJP's 1st list, Somanna to take on Siddu

52 new faces included; Ashoka pitted against DKS in Kanakapura; CM sticks to Shiggaon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi/Bengaluru

AFTER holding hectic consultations for several days, the ruling BJP late Tuesday night announced its first list of 189 candidates with 52 new faces, two days before the nomination process is scheduled to start on Thursday. The second list is expected in a day or two. In a bid to make the fight tough for the Congress' chief ministerial aspirants, the BJP has fielded Revenue Minister R Ashoka against KPCC president DK Shivakumar in the latter's pocketborough Kanakapura and Housing Minister V Somanna against former CM Siddaramaiah in Varuna, which the Congress considers a "safe" seat.

Ashoka will also contest from his Padmanabhanagar constituency in Bengaluru, while Somanna from Chamarajnagar.

A LITTLE BIT FOR EVERYONE?

Fresh faces	52
OBCs	32
SCs	30
STs	16
Doctors	9
Post-graduates	31
Academicians	3
IAS	1
IPS	1
Retd govt officials	3
Social activists	8

IN THE FRAY

CONSTITUENCY	CONTESTANT
Shiggaon	Basavaraj Bommai
Hippani	Shashikala Jolle
Ballari (ST)	B Sriramulu
Tirthahalli	Araga Jnanendra
Shikaripur	BY Vijayendra
Chikkamagaluru	CT Ravi
Chikkanayakanahalli	JC Madhu Swamy
Kolar	Varthur Prakash
Kanakapura, Padmanabhanagar	R Ashoka
Varuna, Chamarajanagar	V Somanna

ASSEMBLY POLLS 2023 DECIDE

"In the last elections, Siddaramaiah won by a narrow margin (in Badami against B Sriramulu) and this time we are 100% sure of defeating him," BJP national general secretary Arun Singh said while releasing the first list in Delhi.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will be seeking reelection from his home constituency Shiggaon in Haveri district. Former CM BS Yediyurappa's son BY Vijayendra will be contesting from Shikaripura which was represented by the party's Lingayat strongman for nearly four decades. Former IPS officer Bhaskar Rao, who recently switched from AAP to BJP, will contest from Chamarajpet in Bengaluru. He will take on Congress's Zameer Ahmed Khan. Former IAS officer Anil Kumar will contest against former DyCM G Parameshwara in Koratagere in Tumakuru district. The party is fielding 52 new faces to overcome the anti-incumbency factor, while also retaining most of the heavyweights, including "turncoats" who had helped BJP form its government in 2019.

Fisheries minister and seven-time MLA S Angara has been dropped and has been replaced by newbie Bhagirathi Murulya, a former zilla panchayat member. In all, five sitting MLAs have been dropped in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts.

The party, which is also banking on the recently announced reservation policy, is fielding 30 from SCs, 16 from STs, and 32 from OBCs. Singh and Union Minister and Karnataka election in-charge for BJP, Dharmendra Pradhan, said they had followed a detailed consultation process involving 25,000 party workers right from assembly segments. P4

Shettar defies, KSE calls it a day

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

UNCERTAINTY prevailed in the state BJP on Tuesday with many senior leaders getting calls from the party high command not to contest the May 10 Assembly elections.

Former CM Jagadish Shettar openly defied the central leadership by rejecting its suggestion not to contest the Assembly elections, while former deputy chief minister KS Eshwarappa announced his retirement from electoral politics. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, who held extensive discussions with the central leaders, hinted that many seniors are unlikely to get tickets. Bommai said the Congress has given ticket to 92-year-old Shamanur Shivashankarappa. But this will not happen in BJP. "So far, there was an anti-incumbency wave, but now there is pro-incumbency everywhere," he added. P4

OPPN GIMMICK?

No merger with Amul, says KMF chairman

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @ Belagavi

AMIDST the raging controversy over reports of a possible merger of KMF (Nandini brand) with Amul, chairman of KMF Balachandra Jarkiholi has clarified that under no circumstances KMF will be merged with Amul.

Hitting out at political leaders, particularly from the Congress, for needlessly raising the issue of Amul and KMF merger to mislead the people, he said, "There is no proposal, whatsoever, for the merger. The KMF will be the first to reject the proposal," he said.

The Opposition parties have made this an issue for political gains ahead of the Assembly elections. "I am sure that this issue will be put to rest by them once the elections are over," he said.

The issue was raised after Union Cooperatives Minister Amit Shah stated in Mandya recently that it would be great if Amul and KMF started working together.

"As KMF chairman, I assure the people and farmers of Karnataka that the federation will never have a tie up with Amul. The statement of Shah has been politicised by Congress leaders. I am wondering as to how a leader of Siddaramaiah's stature could politicise the issue when he is aware that there is no such proposal," Balachandra Jarkiholi said.

CONTINUED ON: P2

BENGALUREANS STEER CLEAR OF NANDINI VS AMUL ISSUE

With the political tussle over Nandini and Amul boiling over ahead of the Assembly polls, Bengalureans opine that they have other problems to fret over and prefer to stay away from the cacophony. P2

El Nino or not, it will be normal monsoon: IMD

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

WEATHER forecasting in India is always dicey. The government-run Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday predicted a normal southwest monsoon despite the possibility of El Nino, a day after private weather forecaster Skymet interpreted it otherwise. In the past five years, both got their predictions right only once (see table). El Niño is the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean that can affect precipitation.

The IMD said the overall rainfall would be 96% of the long period average (LPA) with a model error of 5%. While peninsular India, most of Northeast and the adjoining East-central India are expected to have normal to above-normal rainfall, it would be normal to below-normal in the Northwest, parts of West-central and some Northeast pockets.

The LPA of the season's rainfall across the country based on data from 1971 to 2020 is 87 cm; this year's corresponding figure is expected to be around 83 cm. The IMD's statistical and dynamic models suggest higher probability of seasonal monsoon to be normal — between 96% and 104%.

IMD director general Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said the normal rainfall forecast is based on the positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions and low snow cover over the Northern Hemisphere. The IOD is the difference in sea-surface temperatures in opposite parts of the Indian Ocean.

Mohapatra said the impact of El Nino would not be much. "Every El Nino year was not drought year, but every drought year was an El Nino year," said Mohapatra.

Comparing predictions with the actual rainfall

Year	IMD's forecast (April prediction; error margin 5%)	Skymet forecast (April prediction; error margin 5%)	Actual
2023	96%	94%	--
2022	99%	98%	106%
2021	98%	103%	99%
2020*	100%	NA	109%
2019	96%	93%	110%
2018	97%	100%	91%

* In year 2020, Skymet didn't come up with data due to Covid-19

Deficit: < 90%, Below normal: 90-95%, Normal range: 96-104%, Above normal: 105-114%, Excess: >115%

Figuring out El Nino

El Nino year with deficit	El Nino year with normal
1951	1953
1965	1957
1972	1963
1982	1969
1987	1991
2002	1997
2004	--
2009	--
2015	--

BLEAK OUTLOOK

IMF cuts India growth forecast to 5.9% in FY24

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday moderated its projection of India's growth in FY24 to 5.9%, a 20 basis-point drop from its January forecast of 6.1%.

This is substantially lower than Reserve Bank of India's latest projection of 6.5% growth in the current financial year.

The growth outlook for FY25 has also been cut to 6.3%, down 50 basis points from the earlier estimate of 9.8%.

Despite the downward revisions, India continues to be the fastest-growing economy in the world, the World Economic Outlook figures revealed.

As for world economy, IMF trimmed growth prospects citing risks from rising interest rates and uncertainties resulting from the collapse of two US regional banks and the forced merger of Credit Suisse. The IMF now sees global growth to be 2.8% this year, down from 3.4% in 2022 and from the 2.9% estimate for 2023 it made in its previous forecast in January.

"With the recent increase in financial market volatility, the fog around the world economic outlook has thickened," the IMF said. The 190-country lending organisation, however, expects global inflation will decrease going foward, although more slowly than initially anticipated, from 8.7% in 2022 to 7% this year and 4.9% in 2024.

"Tentative signs in early 2023 that the world economy could achieve a soft landing have receded amid stubbornly high inflation and recent financial sector turmoil," it said.

Earlier this month, the World Bank had cut India's growth estimate for FY24 to 6.3% from 6.6% forecast earlier while the Asian Development Bank slashed its projection for India to 6.4% from 7.2%.

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Officer faces sack for accidental shooting of IAF chopper

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Indian Air Force's General Court Martial (GCM) that probed the accidental shooting down of an Mi-17 V5 helicopter in February 2019, a day after the Balakot attack in Pakistan, has recommended dismissal of a Group Captain. Sources said the GCM ordered the sacking of Group Captain Suman Roy Chowdhury, who was serving as Chief Operations Officer of the Srinagar Air Force Station at that point in time.

The probe determined that the attack helicopter was struck by the IAF's surface-to-air missile when the chopper was on its way back to Srinagar on February 27, the day Indian and Pakistani air forces were engaged in a dogfight on the Line of Control.

The Mi-17V5 had crashed in the Budgam area shortly after take-off killing all six onboard and one civilian on the ground.

The GCM's decision is yet to be sent to the IAF chief for confirmation. "The verdict of GCM is subject to confirmation by the competent authority. Hence, the officer has not been dismissed from service," a defence source said.

Sources said the IAF can act on the GCM's recommendation only after a decision on a case relating to the incident by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Last month, the HC is understood to have allowed the GCM to pronounce its verdict while stating it must not be implemented till the court disposes of the case.